

for Medicare. This bill guarantees benefits, No. 1. No. 2, this bill lengthens the life of Medicare for several years, as I said. No. 3, this bill helps with the cost of prescription drugs by closing that doughnut hole my friends on the other side of the aisle created back in 2003 with President Bush because the drug companies wanted it that way and the insurance companies wanted it that way.

Last, this bill provides all kinds of services to seniors they were not getting before—mammograms, colonoscopies—for free because we want—not that we want to do a giveaway but we want seniors to be healthy and live longer and have healthier lives. We know that is good for our country. It is good for them. It is good for our families. I am incredulous when I hear them talk about Medicare.

The second thing I am incredulous about when I hear them, that is pretty unbelievable, is how they talk about partisanship. In the Health, Education, Labor, Pensions Committee, which Senator COBURN sits on and Senator BURR sits on—two of the people who were talking earlier—and the Presiding Officer sits on, we accepted 160 amendments. I voted for almost all of them. They made sense. Some were minor; some were more major. That gave this bill a bipartisan flavor to it.

But now they say the bill is too partisan and we were not listening, they say we are rushing it through—whatever they say. But the reason, even with those 160 Republican amendments, they do not want to pass it is twofold. One is people such as Senator DEMINT said: This is the President's Waterloo. If we can defeat this, we can end his presidency. So part of their opposition is strict win-at-any-cost partisanship.

The other reason is, even though there are 160 Republican amendments, on the big questions of the day, it is a philosophical difference. Go back to 1965. Very few Republicans supported Medicare. On the key vote in the House of Representatives, only 10 out of 160 or 170 Republicans supported Medicare. Over here, in those days, there were a few sort of "Rockefeller Republicans" who supported it. But, by and large, the mainstream Republican party, at least in Congress, opposed Medicare.

So just like they opposed Medicare because it was a big question, they are opposing this bill because it is a big philosophical question. That is fine they disagree with us, but do not accuse us of partisanship when, one, many of them want President Obama to fail. That is a strategy. It is a political strategy. But, second, do not accuse us of partisanship when 160 Republican amendments were in this bill in my committee, and in Senator BAUCUS's committee many amendments were accepted that were Republican amendments.

Then to say we have to slow this down because it has gone too fast, these negotiations have been going on

for months. In the Finance Committee, the Gang of 6 started in mid-June officially, and it began before that.

I want to put a human face on this. When they say, let's not move too fast, do you know why I want to move, why I want to get this done by Christmas? We do not deserve to have Christmas with our families until we finish this. Do you know why? Because every day in my State—in Defiance and in Williwick and in Warren and in Steubenville—every day in my State, 390 Ohioans—lose health insurance.

Do you know what else? One thousand people every single week in this country die because they did not have insurance. So 390 people in my State alone—probably 350 in Michigan; probably 250 in Minnesota—every single day are losing their health insurance, and in this country 1,000 people a week are dying because they do not have health insurance. A woman with breast cancer is 40 percent more likely to die if she is uninsured than if she is insured—40 percent more likely to die if she is uninsured than if she is insured.

So when I see my friends stall and stall, and they have all kinds of reasons—they have the clerk read the bill, they try to talk too long—whatever it is, however they are stalling in so many different ways, they should think about those 390 Ohioans who lose their insurance every day, think about the 1,000 people a week who die because they don't have insurance, and think of the woman with breast cancer without insurance who just has more trouble fighting back.

To further put a human face on this, I wish to share some letters from people in Ohio who have written me. These are people who understand how important it is because it is important to their personal lives, their families, their loved ones, themselves, that we take care of this bill by Christmas.

Sandra from Franklin County writes:

In December 2008, my partner lost her job. In July of this year she started working part-time in the evening, which didn't offer insurance. In October she found full-time work. We are grateful she is now employed. The job has no coverage. While she was unemployed, it hurt us financially. We are behind on some bills. But we can't afford health insurance for her now. It's a similar story with a friend of mine. He lost his job last year. After looking for a job, he decided to go back to school. He finally found a job and is happy for that. But he also doesn't get insurance.

Maria from Montgomery County writes:

I work in a school and come in contact daily with struggling families who can't afford basic medical care for their families. Please help. We want an America that sees health care as a right for all.

Today, I was on "Face the Nation" with Senator LANDRIEU and Senator ALEXANDER. A woman I was talking to works there part time as a contractor. She has a contracting relationship with them. She helps prepare people before they go on the air. She is not employed by CBS; she is an inde-

pendent contractor. She has her small business. She has insurance and she pays a whole lot of money for it, and she said: Five years from now, I am going to be on Medicare. I look forward to having the stability and predictability of real health insurance. That is why this is so very important.

Roberta from Greene County down in Xenia, between Dayton and Columbus:

I am a senior citizen who feels uncomfortable using my fabulous Medicare benefits when others—parents, ill people, the unemployed—don't have any health care at all. Please pass health care reform for all who need and are without medical care.

Roberta, who is on Medicare, knows and understands, No. 1, how important Medicare is to her. She also knows she is going to get more from this bill, including free screenings for mammograms, a free physical every year, and the cost of prescription drugs will be less because we are closing the doughnut hole. She knows this bill—unlike when the Republicans tried to privatize Medicare in 2003—actually lengthens the life of Medicare.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, would the Senator yield for a question? I am going to be speaking at the end of this hour that has been allocated to our side, and I don't want to interrupt the Senator from Ohio but for one reason. I don't know if the Senator from Ohio heard or is aware of a statement made earlier today by our colleague from Oklahoma, Senator COBURN, who came to the floor and said:

What the American people ought to pray is that somebody can't make the vote tonight. That is what they ought to pray.

I have been trying to reach Senator COBURN because he is on a committee on which I serve and I work with him. This statement troubles me. I am trying to reach him to come back to the floor and explain exactly what he meant about a Senator not being able to make the vote tonight.

I don't know if the Senator from Ohio is familiar with this statement, but I am reaching out to Senator COBURN. I will be on the floor in the next 45 minutes, and I hope he will join me.

I thank the Senator from Ohio for yielding.

Mr. BROWN. I did not see that quote, but I watched what happened here 2 nights ago when we were trying to pass the Defense appropriations bill to make sure our troops were funded in Afghanistan, Iraq, and stateside and in Europe and everywhere else—Korea, everywhere. The Republicans wanted to kill that even though it would mean no funding, it would mean military layoffs, it would mean we wouldn't be able to get the things and supplies we need for the troops, because they said: We want to kill health care reform. I don't understand the desperation—except maybe I do because everything about this debate is protecting the insurance companies. I guess that is more important to them than anything else. So I will be interested too. I appreciate the assistant majority leader's